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A Silence Broken

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Salem State
The Graduate School Department of English

A SILENCE BROKEN

A Manuscript in English
Evalynn Savana Bulger

Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
May 2017

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"THERE IS NO GREATER AGONY THAN BEARING AN UNTOLD STORY"

Maya Angelou

PUTREA TREE

There once was a farm just a mile from our village
with putrea trees like roots in a sea of clouds

We peered up into those roots
the fingers of the sun weaving
through its leaves and gnarls

We basked in the warmth under the putrea

With our backs against the trunk
we surveyed small apples
in the nets of our shirts

We didn't care for the owner --
We simply plucked and plucked until our hands overflowed

We talked about plans to skip school
to see the newest Bruce Lee movie

Crisp bites into the black-red soft flesh
a flood of sweetness smothered our senses

The taste of infinite freedom

We laughed as Heng stood up
demonstrating his best impression of
Lee's signature moves

We threw the putrea -- booing him
But we were interrupted
by the farmer

បញ្ចប់

banhchhob

Stop

We scrambled up
shoving as
many
of the
small
apples
as we could
into our pants
before escaping from
the safety of the trees

We race off towards our village
our laughter making us spill over one another
Our stolen fruits trickling away from us as we ran

When we could no longer see the
floating roots like seaweeds in the horizon behind us
we slowed down to reach into our pockets
and my fingers closed around a stray one

A resounding crunch echoed
but instead of sweet
my tongue was bathed in sour

EVACUATION*

*The morning of April 20, 1975, the
Khmer Rouge evacuated the
Cambodian people from their homes.*

*Tell me why I feel this way
I still ask -- Am I next?
When will my day come?
How long before I -- too --
Am gripped within the ropes of Despair?*

*His fists of -- Lead -- knocked on doors
Alarmed faces listened to his threats: they're going to Bomb us
He told them they need to leave
America is coming!
Got to concentrate, file away*

*Shadows of dark feathers
shrouded him as he exited alone
His blade -- Stained -- the cloth
a Butterfly of maroon blood
Don't want to lose what's going down*

*Vows of Betrayal:
We can keep you -- Safe -- he Promised
His threats of Bombing met with Resistance
then met with a screaming silence
Every last detail*

*Tomorrows are held in its serrated edge
Eyes obscured by reflective lens
Opposition clothed in military uniforms
For those there was only -- Execution
I want to remember everything I'm feeling*

*Tear-streaked faces searched for familiar eyes
Fingers clawed at the air -- Unanswered
Unending howls of the wind cried
as children ripped from their mothers*

Should time try fading or stealing something away

Hold on, nothing's the same
Marked for this Life
with bone-piercing memories
that unbraid the Soul--

**Lyrics from "Hold On" by Carlos Santana*

THREE

made way to the next camp
the groan of stomachs
only company

Sweltering sun pressed
into backs preparing for
another six months working dawn to dusk

ទៅនឹងការស្លាប់ របស់យើង
chee whit jung krowie
to our death

Sweat stung eyes
Soreness plagued arms
Pain clung to legs

Cramps clenched toes
Heat slumped shoulders
15 miles to go

Tired eyes caught
sight of a brilliant red
Hearts froze

Done something wrong?
Eyes lingered too long as trio of girls walked past?
Or was it faces that betrayed resentment?

No
Just a sole strawberry
lingering in the leaves

A collective sigh as
eyes shifted
Yes?

No
Couldn't be trusted.
Could betray rest.

យើងនឹងត្រូវស្លាប់... យើងគ្រាន់តែ មិនដឹងថាពេល
yeung nung trauv slab... yeung kreante mindoeng tha pel na
we will die...we just don't know when

Feet continued on
as silent tears streaked faces
and growl within bellies intensified

BREAKING THEM

Wildflowers: men, women, and children in the open breath of rain
I walk the line to find the one who will break them all
My fingers caressing the length of my machete
My feet pacing like a heartbeat -- I must not be wasteful

I walk the line to find the one who will break them all
Listening to the cold sweat in their quivering chests
My feet pacing like a heartbeat -- I must not be wasteful
One glimmer of light and I will pounce

Listening to the cold sweat in their quivering chests
Who will it be -- I ask myself
One glimmer of light and I will pounce
And preserve them -- mind, body, and soul within the curve of my blade

Who will it be -- I ask myself
The heartbeat of my pacing pauses
Preserve them -- mind, body, and soul within the curve of my blade
My blood-hungry eyes connecting with desperate mercy

The heartbeat of my pacing pauses
Wildflowers: men, women, and children in the open breath of rain
My now rabid eyes connecting with unachievable mercy
My fingers caressing the length of my machete

I have found the one who will break them all

He knows I have found him
In his eyes I see his tender heart clench his fists
Defiance glimmering in the light of his eyes
Testing me -- me who holds the balance of his life within the curve of my blade

Yes -- he is the one who will break them all

I pull him from the line
He kneels before me and I see that glimmer again
I know I need to extinguish it before it catches and they all become rotten

Showered in a blooming blossom of his blood I survey the rest of them
Questioning their allegiance -- but my glare is left unmet

They are broken

I sit on the porch of my cabin
Waiting to begin the walk down the line again
To find the one who will break the new batch of
Wildflowers in the open breath of rain --
I must not be wasteful

BURNED

The terror-stricken
hearts beating against
taut skin sounds
through the air
blotted only by the groan of starvation

Stillness vibrates their core

Their numb eyes
afraid to look away watch
as the sound of wood
meeting skull reverberates
through the air

Their lips sewn together with
the thread of fear

They watch its eyes dim of life

A flicker remains

Soldiers toss it into
the fire and extinguish it

Silence meets the
excruciating cries
from the flames until
reduced to echoes through the air
leaving but a

ការចងចាំ តែ
anuk savari
mere memory

LOTUS LOST

Horizon of low-lying plains obscured
by the velvet whisper of rice fields

Exhaustion consumed her frail frame
Laughing faces faded in and out and
sweat dripped onto her crinkled brow

Pained eyes turned to murky waters:
a lone lotus sat on the surface
its petals wavering as dark pressed on

Hands reeking of earth smothered her
iron of dirt flooded her tongue
the lotus trembled in tarnished waters

Hummingbird of his heart
vibrated through her quivering doe chest
dinginess clung to the pearly petals of the lotus

Screams trapped deep inside her premature body
the strain of pain ripping the strands of the lotus
while dripping rubies blossomed upon each petal

One last push -- it was done
the stench of stale breath lingered on her neck
as the echo of leather belts clanked around her

Amplified crunch of gravel underneath heavy military boots
and incoherent chatter broke the silence
as they disregarded the broken blossom

He spat his cigarette to the ground next to her --
nauseating sizzle of burnt tobacco
mingled with the odor of sweat, filth, and shame choking her

ស្ងប់ស្ងាត់

Som sngat

“Be quiet”

Glistening eyes searched the muddy waters: the dusk
claimed her last petal -- return only once the dawn had broken

LADY WILLOW

1.5 million lives
of 8 million--

Starved
Diseased
Overworked
Executed:

ເມື່ອ

Meul

Watch

Her eyes close and
she still sees

One
by
one
his limbs extended and staked into the
ground

Soldiers of the same breed
faced the circle of
silent watchers
ensuring eyes did not wander
from the lady or man

ເມື່ອ

Meul

Watch

The sun twinkled
off the edge of the machete --
a glare that haunts her eyes to this day

A raging sea
in a teardrop
as the whistle of the
blade slices
through the air --

The willow
shook uncontrollably
as ear-splitting screams
reached the chasms of her mind

Life faded
already becoming yesterday

Petals of his skin bloomed outwards
opening up to the sweltering sun

Brilliant rubies
maroon and black
accented the air as
hands pried apart the petals
revealing its center

Life's nectar spilled into the air
seeping into the now onyx dirt
creeping towards the willow's roots

Cherry stains
trickled down the willow's leaves and bark
as life within faded
until she too was
yesterday

เมืง

Meul

Watch

1.5 million
lives lost

Starved
Diseased
Overworked
Executed:

Yet alive in the
echoing wind of the willow

DEEDS

*...Maybe it was bad deeds in our previous lives
that had kept us apart, and so if we did
good deeds in this life, maybe in a future
one we could be together.
- 2-TCCP-232
(Tribunal hearing in Courts of Cambodia)*

*This life
next life
we pay our dues --*

We lined up in the open
field where the rust red sky
melted into the horizon of our Forsaken land

My eyes wandered to the Moon:
*Is our love strong enough for this?
So strong that my love's eyes also see this dark night?
See that I have no choice?*

We were gathered there that day:

We were No. 1, No. 2, No. 3...
all the way up to No. 50
I didn't look at the one I was paired with
We were No. 42 -- Forever and Always
but more like Brother & Sister than husband & wife --

With no rice thrown
no spirits
no celebration
just a damp Darkness and the -- brush of our bones -- with those of Strangers
no matching gold silks dripping with emeralds or rubies
no shower of Flowers dipped in Blessed water--
just Faceless partners brought together that night

Listeners at the doors and windows

expected consummation
Eyes avoided contact and remained Faceless for the evening
instead of searching for one another with yearning
Features only to be revealed with the
unyielding break of the dawn

Pardoning prayers
along the imagined red threads of marriage
creating unintentional bonds that only
strengthened with the years

And one day when I see my love again
decades after we are released from the
Hell of the Khmer Rouge
We will hold each other
We will cry as we say--

In this life
we pay our dues
so that in the next
we can be ours again:

And in that future
there will be rice
there will be laughter
wide smiles and gold crowns
week long celebrations
hundreds of red thread tied around our wrists
It will be Blessed and proper

We will not be cloaked in a shroud of Blackness
Our eyes will meet with adoration
and not look away in Humiliation

But for this life, I stay with No. 42
We survive and become united by the
Ostracization inflicted upon us --

We understand that what had been brought together to Destroy has only strengthened our bonds

SWING CAROUSEL

I reciprocate the beaming smile on her lips: my oldest with her arm wrapped around her sister
I watch her excited squeal erupt into a wider grin as the gears of the Swing Carousel jolt awake
I wave back to my girls in neon green and pink -- pride in my heart and happiness in my eyes
I try to snap a picture before they become a blur from the movement of the Swing Carousel
I need to capture this moment -- this is what I survived for-- to see Innocence again
I laugh with my girls as the carousel rises up from the ground and swings them further away
I can barely make out their hair, so Black that it reflects the Sun and I realize that they are too far

My chest tightens --
a cold Sweat radiates from my neck
and extends down my spine
And just like that like a Sore on the tip of my tongue
that tweaks when I least expect it --
I'm brought back

I hear wails of Children as they spin and spin
piercing my heart as images flash before me:
looming Trees that cast shadows
as long and as dark as the night of the soul
Bayonets pierce the velvet sky cloaked by the Moon
Hands gripping ankles and swinging and swinging --
my eyes frantically search for my neon-clad girls -- the faster they go the higher they reach
Infant heads touch the ever-watching Moon
My heart follows the swoosh of wind trailing behind the neon as they whip around and around
Cries echo into the Blackness
I wait for the hollow thump of bodies impacting tree trunks
For the irreversible squelch of a body staked by the gleaming edge of the bayonet

I Wait -- my lungs on fire from baited breath -- I Wait...

But the moment passes
My eyes adjust to the sunshine as the darkness ebbs
Neon flashes before -- my girls are here and not in the air
They stand before me with smiles cracked by laughter
The burn recedes as I release my breath
Neon squeals and laughter echo through me as I am tugged away to the next ride
while the thump and squelch remain a dormant hangnail that won't heal

WILD ONES

i'm losing my
balance
on their
eggshells --
i'm weighted
by my
desire
to be
cage free

the mantra:
"the only thing that can't be
taken from you
is your education" --
pushed to be more & do more
pressured to become
someone i can no longer recognize

i am nothing more than a
vessel of their haunted memories
shaped by their experiences
from so many years ago
& i've lost
the heart of me

can't they see?

they care too much about the others:
"make sure you're dressed appropriately"
& "be careful with that one --
people will talk"
& "look at my new \$60,000 car"

when really i could
care less about the others:
i don't exist to please them

i need my own experiences
& i don't care what they say
i don't need to be flashy
or show off what i have
or what i've earned
i let my success speak with its own voice

& it's a shame
their
minds
are too
narrow
to understand that

but for the sake of my family
i suffocate myself
like i've
dived into the depths & i'm drowning
in its teal sea
trying to sing from the
cage they've worked
around me
gasping for the freedom
to be me

EGG or SPRING

I sneak one from behind him, as he stands watch
with wooden chopsticks over the boiling oil.
I crunch into its perfectly fried caramel brown shell
and I feel him smirk.
I don't even care that the steam from its center singes my lips.
This is our ritual almost every Sunday, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and birthday.

Egg Rolls -- at least that's what my dad calls them.
For others they are Spring rolls.
Either way, I never understood their name --
where did the Egg or Spring come from?

I wonder if it's because of the Egg in the wrap.
Or maybe it's more about the crispness as you
bite into its fried flesh --
an Undeniable Presence:
crisp crunches that can't be
erased from memory.
Egg or Spring?

Maybe it's because Spring was when it all changed
in the fields of Cambodia:
when there were no more celebrations.
No more showers of food.
No more family.
Only long hours working in the rice fields
with an unending starvation that lasted four years.
And haunts even decades later.
Egg or Spring?

My father is still hungry.
He feeds us until we are gorged.
He never wastes even the edges of strawberries
I wonder if he does this because he thinks it will fill him, too.
Or if it reminds him of how lucky he is today.
But he will always be hungry. Empty.
Egg or Spring?

Egg it will remain for him until
vengeance no longer yields -- Ignorance no longer reigns.

ការដឹងគុណ *

“Keep you, we gain nothing
Lose you, we lose nothing”

They spread through the country
like a virus from the rice fields

Plagued for generations by
Painful, treacherous words:
“What is rotten must be removed”

In search of a Utopia
they emptied our cities
and ravaged the land

They took from us:
Innocence was lost
Souls were stolen
Bonds were broken
Flesh was tortured
Minds were scarred

But they gave us:
Knowledge of betrayal
Appreciation of our loved ones
Self-reliance to persevere
Scars to show we lived and
Memories to remind us that we survived

Our strength will live on in generations to come

អរគុណ

arkoun

thank you.

** kar dungkun is Khmer for gratitude*

APPENDIX A

Poem Drafts

Evalynn Bulger
Dr. Ann Taylor
15 September 2016
Poem 1: "Lotus Lost"

Exhaustion consumed her ~~frail, child-like frame~~
As laughing faces faded in and out and
Sweat dripped onto her crinkled brow

too many adj.

myth?

She
Her pained eyes turned to the shallow murky water
Where a lone lotus sat on the surface,
Its petals wavering as the dark pressed on in ?

Try
upper
&
lower
case

Hands reeking of earth smothered her
As the iron of dirt flooded her tongue
While the lotus trembled in the tarnished waters

I'm confused

The hummingbird beating of his heart
Vibrated through her quivering chest
While dingy waters clung to the pearly petals of the lotus

whose

Her screams were trapped deep inside her premature body
The strain of pain ripping the strands of the lotus
While scarlet stains blossomed upon each petal

There was one last push and it was done
The stench of stale breath lingered on her neck
As the echo of leather belts clanked around her

Try cutting
some
adjectives

The amplified crunch of gravel underneath heavy military boots
And incoherent chatter broke the silence
As they disregarded the broken blossom laying in the crud

lying

He spat his cigarette to the ground next to her
The nauseating sizzle of burnt tobacco
Mingled with the odor of sweat, filth, and shame choking her

សូមស្ងៀម
Som sngat
"Be quiet"

The dark waters had claimed her last petal
And the lotus was no more

I like the other -
wordy quality
of these pieces,
but the narrative
sometimes gets
lost in the images.

"Lotus Lost"

Poem 1, draft 2

Horizon of low-lying plains
obscured by the velvet whisper
of rice fields

Exhaustion consumed her frail frame
as laughing faces faded in and out and
sweat dripped onto her crinkled brow

Her pained eyes turned to murky waters
where a lone lotus sat on the surface,
its petals wavering as the dark pressed on

Hands reeking of earth smothered her
as the iron of dirt flooded her tongue
while the lotus trembled in tarnished waters

The hummingbird of his heart
vibrated through her quivering doe chest
while dinginess clung to the pearly petals of the lotus

Her screams trapped deep inside her premature body
the strain of pain ripping the strands of the lotus
while dripping rubies blossomed upon each petal

There was one last push and it was done
the stench of stale breath lingered on her neck
as the echo of leather belts clanked around her

Amplified crunch of gravel underneath heavy military boots
and incoherent chatter broke the silence
as they disregarded the broken blossom

He spat his cigarette to the ground next to her
nauseating sizzle of burnt tobacco
mingled with the odor of sweat, filth, and shame choking her

ស្ងៀមស្ងាត់
Som sngat
"Be quiet"

Glistening eyes searched the muddy waters
but the dusk claimed her last petal
to return only once the dawn had broken

Try present tense?

image?

sentences
or not?

The narrative still gets lost
(on me, anyway)
Could you state the story
in one sentence?

Evalynn Bulger

Dr. Ann Taylor

22 September 2016

Poem 1: "Lotus Lost", ROTATION

Exhaustion consumed her ~~frail, child-like frame~~
As laughing faces faded in and out and
Sweat dripped onto her crinkled brow *wrinkle?*

Her pained eyes turned to the shallow murky water
Where a lone lotus sat on the surface
Its petals wavering as the dark pressed on

Hands reeking of earth smothered her
As the iron of dirt flooded her tongue
While the lotus trembled in the tarnished waters

The hummingbird beating of ^{*phatic*} his heart *no explanation of him before*
Vibrated through her quivering chest
While dingy waters clung to the pearly petals of the lotus

Her screams were trapped deep inside her premature body
The strain of pain ripping the strands of the lotus
While scarlet stains blossomed upon each petal

There was one last push and it was done
The stench of stale breath lingered on her neck
As the echo of leather belts clanked around her

The amplified crunch of gravel underneath heavy military boots
And incoherent chatter broke the silence
As they disregarded the broken blossom laying in the crud

He spat his cigarette to the ground next to her
The nauseating sizzle of burnt tobacco
Mingled with the odor of sweat, filth, ~~and shame~~ choking her

សូមស្ងៀម
Som sngat
"Be quiet"

stay quiet?

The dark waters had claimed her last petal
And the lotus was no more

LOTUS LOST

Edits
with
Alex's
comments

Horizon of low-lying plains ~~obsured~~
~~obsured~~ by the velvet whisper ~~5~~ *complet here*
of rice fields

Exhaustion consumed her frail frame
as laughing faces faded in and out and
sweat dripped onto her crinkled brow

Her pained eyes turned to murky waters
~~was~~ a lone lotus sat on the surface
its petals wavering as the dark pressed on

Hands reeking of earth smothered her
as the iron of dirt flooded her tongue
while the lotus trembled in tarnished waters

~~was~~ Hummingbird of his heart
vibrated through her quivering doe chest
~~was~~ dinginess clung to the pearly petals of the lotus

~~was~~ Screams trapped deep inside her premature body
the strain of pain ripping the strands of the lotus
while dripping rubies blossomed upon each petal

~~There was~~ One last push and it was done
the stench of stale breath lingered on her neck
as the echo of leather belts clanked around her

Amplified crunch of gravel underneath heavy military boots
and incoherent chatter broke the silence
as they disregarded the broken blossom

He spat his cigarette to the ground next to her —
~~was~~ nauseating sizzle of burnt tobacco
mingled with the odor of sweat, filth, and shame choking her

ស្ងប់ស្ងាត់
Som sngat
"Be quiet"

Glistening eyes searched the muddy waters ~~the dusk~~
~~but the dusk~~ claimed her last petal. ~~5~~ *complet here (cyclical)*
~~to~~ return only once, the dawn had broken.

Evalynn Bulger
Dr. Ann Taylor
22 September 2016
Poem 2: "The Willow"

"you"
You wipe ~~at~~ your brow and the ~~thick~~ *chose*
thick dirt smudges and mingles with the sweat
leaving a harsh line across your furrowed brow

Hands are full with the rice leaves
when you see the *kmao euy*
sitting in the muddy water
allowing the murkiness to embrace her
as her hair ~~so~~ like the willow's leaves
fall into her face

? Julia
The willow behind the temple
with its leaves brushing against the grindstone
of the prayer's home

"Why do you weep, willow?"

*Who is
she
you
here?*
Your eyes are met with a
gaze—an emptiness as vast as the ocean is wide

Her shoulder rounded and drooping

The wind whistling through her leaves and she is brought back

The willow winces and
knuckles turn ivory like the bone

Is this a Viet Nam poem?
a girl?
now the you is a willow?
ເຢັນ
Meul
Watch

One
by
one
the limbs
are extended
and staked into
the ground

Soldiers stood to face the circle of
silent watchers
ensuring their eyes did not wander

ເຢັນ

Meul

Watch

The sun twinkled
off the edge of the machete

He looked at her
Eyes filled with sorrow,
yearning, and forgiveness

As the ~~swift~~ whistle of the
blade sliced
through the air
sorrow ~~was~~ quickly
replaced by horror

The willow
shook uncontrollably
as ear-splitting screams
reached ~~in~~ the ~~dark~~ chasms of her mind, watching him fade before her once more
already becoming
yesterday

She watched as the
petals of his skin bloomed outwards
opening up to the sweltering sun

*The right -
justified lines
could be brought
over —*

Brilliant ~~hues~~ of scarlet
maroon and black
accented the air as
the soldier's hands pried apart the petals more
revealing his center

His life's nectar spilled into the air
seeping into the now onyx dirt
creeping towards the willow's roots, ~~joining her existence~~

Becoming one

The willow's leaves and bark
stained red as the life in her faded
until she too was
yesterday

You watch all of this play out in her eyes

Each time our eyes fall on her
rounded
drooping
branches
or the weeping
leaves
we would know horror
cruelty
pain

Verb tense

Not of the skin, but of the heart and mind

failed ?
But what they ignored
to realize was that
he lived on within the willow,

~~His existence~~ within the heart of the willow's bark

*Many good images -
Try more conventional
stanzas.*

*Also, the narrative
needs to be more clear.*

*Willow as symbol of what
salmon → life ?*

Poem 2

"The Willow", Draft 2

1.5 million lives
of 8 million--

Starved
Diseased
Overworked
Executed:

မြေ

Meul

Watch

One
by
one
the limbs are extended and staked into the
ground

Soldiers of the same breed
face the circle of
silent watchers
ensuring eyes do not wander

မြေ

Meul

Watch

The sun twinkles
off the edge of the machete

Eyes filled with raging seas
in one tear drop

Swift whistle of
blade slices
through the air

The willow
shakes uncontrollably
as ear-splitting screams
reach the dark chasms of the mind

*I like
this refrain*

*(I think it's
intruding on
repetition?)*

*Could you be a little
more explicit
without becoming
too obvious*

*I like the resonance
of meul to the drum.*

Evalynn Bulger
Dr. Ann Taylor
Poetry Workshop
29 September 2016
Poem 3: "Wild Ones"

Wild Ones)?

i'm losing my
balance
on your
eggshells

good

i'm weighted
[by a
love for my
cutting edge
craze &]

? cliché

i want to be
cage free

Do you want
this
image?

can't you see?
I'm suffocating with you like I've dived
into the depths of the world
& i'm drowning in its teal sea

why
pretty?

diff. image
from
drowning

Why the
unconventional
"right-justified?"

The emotion comes
through —

Evalynn Bulger
Dr. Ann Taylor
6 October 2016
Poem 4: "Most Beautiful Ones"

labor camp

persona

Wildflowers: men, women, and children in the open breath of rain
He walks the line to find the ~~best~~, most beautiful one
Fingers caress the length of the machete
Feet pace like a heartbeat--must not be wasteful

He feet?

So ominous

image

He walks the line to find the best, most beautiful one
Listening to the cold sweat in their chests
Feet pace like a heartbeat--must not be wasteful
One glimmer of light and he will pounce

Listening to the cold sweat in their chests
Who will it be?
One glimmer of light and he will pounce
And preserve them -- mind, body, and soul within the curve of his blade

Who will it be?
Heartbeat of his pacing pauses
Preserve them -- mind, body, and soul within the curve of his blade ?
Hungry eyes connect with desperate mercy

I'm not sure of the action here

with what

how so

Heartbeat of his pacing pauses
Wildflowers: men, women, and children in the open breath of rain
Rabid eyes connect with unachievable mercy
Fingers caress the length of the machete

to take or to kill them?

Eudora Welty, where is the voice coming from?

Evalynn Bulger
Poem 5, Draft 1

DEEDS

...Maybe it was bad deeds in our previous lives
that had kept us apart, and so if we did
good deeds in this life, maybe in a future
one we could be together.

2-TCCP-232*

This life
next life
we pay our dues --

Line us up in the open
field where the rust red sky
melts into the horizon of this forsaken land

We are gathered here today:
with no rice thrown
no spirits
no celebration
just a damp darkness and a brush of our bones with those of strangers
no gold gowns dripping with emeralds, rubies, and even more gold
no shower of flowers dipped in blessed water--
just faceless partners brought together today

I'm no one
She's no one
Together, we are no one's--
about to be newlyweds

We are No. 1, No. 2, No. 3...
all the way up to No. 50

CM Her and I we're only ?
No. 42--forever and always
but more like brother & sister than husband & wife

Evalynn
I wish you'd
go for the
situation,
before you put
so much into
the style.

What is the
mean our
meant to
experience
here?

Evalynn Bulger
Poem 6. Draft 1: ROTATION

Rot.

EVACUATION*

The morning of April 20, 1975, the Khmer Rouge evacuated the Cambodian people from their homes.

1. His fists of -- Lead -- knocked on doors
Alarmed faces listened to his threats: they're going to Bomb us
He told them they need to leave
America is coming!
Got to concentrate, file away

he ?

Vows of Betrayal--
We can keep you -- Safe -- he Promised
His threats of Bombing met with Resistance
Then met with a Screaming silence
Every last detail

caps?
lyrics

Shadows of dark Feathers
Shrouded him as he exited alone ?
His blade -- Stained -- the cloth
A Butterfly of maroon Blood
Don't want to lose what's going down

Voices and he
classified...

Tomorrows are held in its Serrated edge
Eyes obscured by reflective lens
Opposition clothed in military uniforms
For those there was only -- Execution
I want to remember everything I'm feeling

Tear-streaked faces searched for familiar eyes
Fingers clawed at the air -- Unanswered
Unending howls of the wind cried
As children ripped from their Mothers
Should time try fading or stealing something away

ff

Tell me why I feel this way
I still ask -- Am I next?
When will my day come?
How long before I -- too --
Am gripped within the Ropes of Despair?

now ?

narrator ?

Hold on, nothing's the same
Marked for this Life
With Bone-piercing memories
That unbraids the Soul--

*Lyrics from "Hold On" by Carlos Santana

Evalynn Bulger
Poem 7

SWING CAROUSEL

I reciprocate the beaming smile on her lips:
my Oldest with her arm wrapped around her Sister's shoulders
an excited squeal erupts into a wider grin as the -- Gears of the Swing Carousel jolt awake
I wave back to her -- pride in my Heart
I try to snap a picture before they become a Blur
I need to capture this Moment -- this is what I Survived for-- to see Innocence again
I laugh with my girls as the carousel rises up from the ground and swings them further away
I can barely make out their hair, so Black that it reflects the Sun
They are too far

My chest tightens --
a cold Sweat radiates from my neck and extends down my spine
And just like that like a Sore on the tip
of my Tongue that Tweaks when I least expect it --
I'm brought back --

I hear
Wails of Children as they spin and spin pierces my Heart, as images flash before me:
looming Trees that cast shadows as long and as dark as the night of the Soul
Bayonets piercing the velvet sky cloaked by the pale Moon
Hands gripping ankles and swinging and swinging
-- my eyes frantically search for my girls --
the faster and faster they go the
Higher and Higher
their infant heads reach the ever-watching Moon
My heart follows the Swoosh of wind trailing
behind the children as they Whip around and around
Their Cries echoing into the Blackness, against
I wait for the Hollow thump of bodies impacting tree trunks
For the Irreversible Squelch of a body staked by the Gleaming edge of the Bayonet
I Wait -- my lungs on fire, from ~~dated~~
Breath -- I Wait...

But the moment is ~~paused~~ ^{passes}
My stare adjusts to the Sunshine as the Darkness ebbs away
My girls are here and not in the air
Standing before me with smiles, cracked by laughter
The Burn recedes as I release my breath,
-- I am tugged away to the next ride
(while the Thump and Squelch remain) -- a dormant Hangnail in my mind --

How do you want to end?

I wouldn't use caps like this. They seem to stress "significance". (It's different in Emily D.)

The contrast is powerful.
Do a "Michelangelo".
(Ask me.)
Try adding adjectives.

Evalynn Bulger
Dr. Ann Taylor
10 November 2016
Poem 8, Draft 1

EGG or SPRING

I sneak one from behind him, as he stands watch
with wooden chopsticks over the boiling oil.
I crunch into its perfectly fried caramel brown shell
and I feel him smirk.
I don't even care that the steam from its center singes my lips.
This is our ritual almost every Sunday, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and birthday.

Egg Rolls -- at least that's what my dad calls them.
For others, they are Spring rolls.
Either way, I never understood their name --
where did the Egg or Spring come from?

I wonder if it's because of the Egg used to close the wrap.
Or maybe it's more about the crispness of it as you
bite into its fried flesh --
an Undeniable Presence.

Or maybe it's because Spring was when it all changed: in
when there were no more celebrations.
No more showers of food.
No more family.
Only long hours working in the rice fields
with an insatiable starvation that lasted four years.
And haunts even decades later.

My father is still hungry.
He feeds us until we are gorged.
He never wastes even the edges of strawberries I cut off to get rid of the leaves.
I wonder if he does this because he thinks it will fill him, too.
Or if it reminds him of how very lucky he is today.
But he will always be hungry. Empty.

Satiated only when Vengeance no longer waits and -- Ignorance no longer Reigns.

good opening

connection -- ?

Is my father refusing
to call up spring?
because of memory?
(but me)

connection?
father seems to reject
the "spring"
idea --

stronger
verb?

Very close.
I like the
grounding.

* meeting with Alex, 345 12/8

Evalynn Bulger
Dr. Ann Taylor
Poem 9: ROTATION 3

By Sun
of the document
of all
poetry

YEW

paper is double-sided

PUTREA TREE

very episodic

There once was a farm just a mile from our village
with putrea trees like roots in a sea of clouds ♡

nets of the sea above

We peered up into those roots
the fingers of the sun ~~piercing~~ ^{omit}
through its leaves and gnarls ♡

mixed metaphor - NOT really working
play around

We basked in the warmth of safety under the putrea

With our backs against the trunk
we surveyed our collection of small apples
in the nets of our shirts ♡

We didn't care for the owner --
We simply plucked and plucked until our hands were overflowing

We talked about our plans to skip school
to go see the newest Bruce Lee movie playing

Crisp bites into the black-red soft flesh
a flood of sweetness smothering our senses

It tasted of infinite freedom

We laughed as Heng stood up
demonstrating his best impression of
Lee's signature moves

We threw the putrea -- booing him
But we were interrupted
by the farmer

ហង្ស

banhchhob

Stop

We scrambled up
shoving as
many
of the
small
apples
we could
into our pants
before escaping from
the safety of the trees

eliminate habitual
~~We'd race off towards our village~~

keep

~~our laughter making us spill over one another~~
Our stolen fruits trickling away from us as we ran

→ when

We could no longer see the
tops of the trees in the horizon behind us
we slowed down to reach into our pockets
~~in search of one last fruit~~
and my fingers closed around a stray one

tree roots

*↓
play around*

[A resounding crunch echoes
but instead of sweet
my tongue is bathed in sour

*giving
plot development*

*joyous mood
sense of foreboding
w/out context*

Evalynn Bulger
Dr. Ann Taylor
Poem 9: ROTATION 3

paper is double-sided

PUTREA TREE

There once was a farm just a mile from our village
with putrea trees like roots in a sea of clouds

We peered up into those roots
the fingers of the sun piercing
through its leaves and gnarls

We basked in the warmth of ~~safety~~ under the putrea

With our backs against the trunk
we surveyed our ~~collection of~~ small apples
in the nets of our shirts

We didn't care for the owner --
We simply plucked and plucked until our hands were overflowing

We talked about ~~our~~ plans to skip school
to ~~go~~ see the newest Bruce Lee movie playing

Crisp bites into the black-red soft flesh
a flood of sweetness smothering our senses

It tasted of ~~infinite~~ freedom

We laughed as Heng stood up
demonstrating his best impression of
Lee's signature moves

We threw the putrea -- booing him
But we were interrupted
by the farmer

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banhchhob

Stop

*father's
voice?*

image?

overflowed

*Is the putrea an
apple tree?
I like the "sensuality"
of the actin*